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ABSTRACT

The communicative language teaching approach is described, its theoretic history is reviewed, and classroom techniques are presented. The origins of the approach are found in research on the development of linguistic competence. Characteristics of the approach include: the goals of language use for communication; use of real-life communicative situations in classroom learning; emphasis on two-way communication; sufficient exposure to the target language; and development of all four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). Links between linguistic and communicative competence are explored, and it is concluded that both are required, and must be taught, for effective communication. The roles of learner, teacher, methods, and materials in the communicative learning process are outlined. The teacher acts as manager of learning activities, advisor during activities, co-communicator, motivator, and evaluator. The student's role is primarily as communicator. Instructional materials serve to promote language use. Classroom procedures are both pre-communicative and communicative, and a combination of both conventional and communicative classroom techniques is advised. Four types of communicative activities (social formulas and dialogues, community-oriented tasks, problem-solving activities, role plays) are described and examples are offered. Contains 21 references. (MSE)

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A Brief Introduction to the Communicative Language Teaching

Liao Xiaoqing

1. The CLT Theoretical Basis

The CLT is an approach to foreign language teaching which emphasizes that the goal of language teaching is communicative competence. According to Canale and Swain, the CLT is "organized on the basis of communicative functions (e.g. apologizing, describing, inviting, promising), that a given learner or groups of learners needs to know and emphasizes the ways in which particular grammatical forms may be used to express these functions appropriately"(1979:1).

Noam Chomsky was the first to put forward the term competence which he described as a mere linguistic system or abstract grammatical knowledge (1965:3), i.e . "the mastery of the abstract system of rules by which a person is able to understand and produce any and all of the well- formed sentences of his language" (Monby,1983:7). However, many sociolinguists argue that linguistic system alone is not enough for effective communication. To contrast Chomsky's theory of competence, Hymes put forward the term communicative competence which contains both knowledge and ability for language use with respect to four factors: "possibility, feasibility, appropriateness and accepted usage"(1979:19). Other sociolinguists like Cooper agree with Hymes, saying that "The speaker must know what to say, with whom, and when, and where" (Cooper, qtd. in Monby, 1983: 17) . Thus Hymes's concept of competence has the sociological component which Chomsky's lacks.A more recent but related analysis of communicative competence is found in Canale and Swain (1980), in which four dimensions of communicative competence are identified: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence (qtd. in Richards and Rodeges, 1986:71). By considering language social behavior, language function, improvisation, and culture difference, we can see that the sociolinguists' view of competence is correct.

Language contains social rules. We must speak language according to them; otherwise we will cause offense. Asking a stranger in a street for direction, for example, we had better say "Excuse me. How can I get to...?" We should not say "Hi, you. Tell me the way to...." or "Excuse me,kind sir. I wonder if you would be so kind as to direct me to...." Although both are grammatically correct, they are not appropriate to the common social situations because the first is considered rather rude and the second excessively polite - both can cause offense to people. Therefore,

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in the process of communication, we must pass judgement on the social acceptability of our utterance and decide whether or not it is an appropriate response to the social context. So Campbell and Wales said, "By far the most important linguistic ability is that of being able to produce or understand utterances which are not so much grammatical but more important,appropriate to the context in which they are made" (1970: 247). Hymes states that any theory of language must contain a sociological component. A theory of communicative competence must deal with notions of the "speech community, speech situation, speak event, speech act, fluent speaker, components of speech events, functions of speech, etc."(qtd.in Zhao:1991).

Language function about what the speaker uses language for is another aspect for effective communication. Only understanding language forms and meanings is not enough to express and understand communicative functions. The function of a same form of words may change with context. The sentence "Why don't you close the door?" can perform many different functions such as questioning, imperative or complaint, depending on the situation and the other sentences surrounding it. Similarly there are many different ways to express one and the same function. Students should know as many functions as a form expresses;otherwise they will cause a communication breakdown just as the Littlewood's example illustrates (the pupil was able to understand only the imperative sentence) (Littelwood, 1983: 12) . Therefore, the functional perspective on language provides us with the rationale for suggesting that teaching only grammatical competence is not enough. Language forms and functions are two crucial components in TEFL; any one of them should not be overemphasized to the neglect of the other.

The improvisational and creative use of language is an important skill for effective communication. We have to make and interpret messages as we communicate without prior preparation. Even in a simple conversational exchange there is an element of the unexpected and unpredictable. This means that we cannot predict what the other will say. Our own response will therefore have to be made up on the spot, and we will have to decide how to react, and what to say. In responding, we will be forced to exploit the language we know in the most creative way, but not to repeat the dialogues learned in the classrooms. For instance, if we either do not know or cannot remember a needed word, we can use known or remembered language instead. If we cannot remember the word "friendship" , then we could substitute a phrase like "a good relationship between two friends". This is the improvisatory skill that EFL students should master.

Finally, the cultural competence should also be gained for cross- cultural

communication. Finocchiaro and Brumfit pointed out that "cultural system" is one of the four subsystems of language(1983:30). This system together with sound system, grammar system, and vocabulary system should be learned by students in order to "speak appropriately, fluently and correctly" (Ibid). The culture governing the appropriateness of native language is not necessary the same as the culture governing the same use of target language because culture in different countries may be different. Greeting people in China is different from greeting in USA. Chinese people regard eating as more important to their friends and acquaintances, thus using "Have you eaten?" as a gracious greeting at about meal time. This is considered inappropriate in USA.Without such knowledge students will be likely to make cultural mistakes - inappropriate use of language in real communication. Therefore, "Differences in cultural meanings across languages are a problem in learning a second language"(Lado, 1979:23). This suggests that cultural differences and speaking rules of the target language should be learned by EFL students. To some extent TEFL is really a process of learning the target culture.

2. The CLT Characteristics

From the above review of the CLT literature, we can draw upon some of the CLT major features. They are greatly different from those of the grammar translation method, so different that it has been a reaction away from traditional method and initiated the communicative era in the TEFL history.

(1) The CLT sets the communicative competence as its desired goal because it views language as tool for communication. It holds that language should be learned through use and through communication. Based on this notion, the teacher usually creates real life situations in classes and has students to play roles, simulations true-to-life interactions, and other communcative activities in order to learn to use language appropriately in different types of situations, to use language to perform different kinds of tasks and to use language for social interaction with other people. Thus, language can be learned as it is actually used in real communication. This communicative feature fundamently differs from that of the traditional method, thus making a new history in the modern foreign language teaching. In contrast, the grammar translation method sets the linguistic competence as its desired goal, which goes away from the essence of language as a tool for communication. It stresses only language structures, sounds or words, thus separating language from use, situation and role.

(2) The CLT insists that interactional speaking activities used in the classroom

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be instances of real communication, based on a genuine information gap. Communication takes place when the receiver doesn't already know the information in the sender's message. In other words, there is an information gap, which is filled by the message. In classrooms, the gap exists when a teacher/student in an exchange knows something that the other student does not. If students know today is Monday and the teacher asks, "What day is today?" and they answer,"Monday, " then the exchange is not really communicative. Consequently, the CLT is violently opposed to such exchanges. It argues that the activities without information gap are mechanical and artificial and even harmful because they will lead students away from the use of the language for communicative purposes. Therefore, in classrooms, no matter how simple a sentence is, the teacher must be aware of its possibility for communication.

(3) The CLT stresses two-way communication. When communicating in real life, we do not say to ourselves, nor monologize as in a drama play, but always exchange the information with others. Therefore in classes, the teacher usually brings students' initiative into full play, limits his talking time and prevents the cramming method in order to let them practice more.Thus students will become active agents communicating throughout the classes rather than passive recipients. This is also a critical difference from the traditional "one-way" teaching - the teacher repeats what the book says while students take notes quietly. For example, in China students are constantly told from children to sit quietly and listen to the teacher, and not to stand up and speak out unless called upon.

(4) The CLT ensures that students have sufficient exposure to the target language. This exposure provides many opportunities for language acquisition to occur. Students are encouraged to create and internalize language; they are not asked to learn by memorizing grammar rules and vocabulary. Therefore students' communicative competence can be developed as they try to deal with a variety of language situations. However, in traditional classroooms, the teacher uses the native language to conduct lessons, thus preventing students from acquisition of the target language.

Finally, the CLT embraces all four skills. By integrating listening, speaking, reading and writing, students can not only develop these skills but also constantly combine them in use as people use them in real life situations. In contrast, the traditional method emphasizes reading in isolation and treats listening, speaking, reading and writing as separate subjects, as a result of training students to become what we call "deaf-mutes of English".

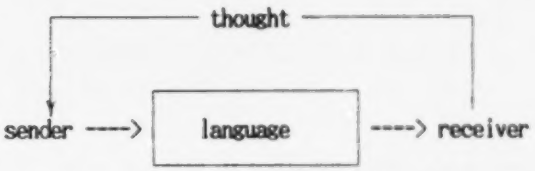
Since the CLT stresses language use, many teachers think , and we admit, that it may overlook language usage teaching. So they raise the questions like: "Does it require existing grammar-based syllabus to be abandoned or merely revised". This may be the case because we agree that linguistic competence is a part and a solid foundation of communicative competence. This disadvantage will inevitably lead to the further negative effect: it encourages some grammatical inaccuracies. Language is like an ocean consisting of, so to speak, so many syntactic and lexical details as well as so many functional and notional possibilities that obviously no student is able to cover them all in his or her study. This is especially true of the students trained under the CLT, since they are bound to sentences' particular functions. Thus, they are sometimes unavoidably required to express what they have never come across in their study. In this case, they are forced to create something of their own. As they lack the knowledge of grammar, they are likely to make grammatically incorrect sentences. Therefore, the CLT encourages some grammar inaccuracy.

However, this problem can be solved by adding language-knowledge teaching into the communicative teaching practice. Because "there is no single text or authority on communicative language teaching, nor any single model that is universally accepted as authoritative" (Gautom, 1988: 82), because its theoretical base is "somewhat eclectic" (Richards and Rodgers, 1986:71), and because it is only an "approach" within which there can be many different methods, we can use it as an eclectic method, collecting many advantages from other methods, including (retaining) the techniques from the grammar translation method to teach language knowledge. Thus, both linguistic and communicative competences can be fully developed. Although the CLT has some unsolved problems, it has far more advantages over disadvantages and can serve China if the problem is solved satisfactorily. It has been employed in recent years by EFL teachers in widely diverse settings in the world. By applying it into our classrooms we can catch up with the rapid development in the study and application of CLT to TEFL in many foreign countries in recent years.

3. Linguistic and Communicative Competences

"Language is communication, the intimation to another being of what one wants and thinks; langauge is activity, basically of four knids (listening, speaking, reading and writing), as well as body language and semiology" (Seaton 1982:86). Otto Jespersen said, "Language is not an end in itself, it is a way of connection between souls, a means of communication". Spoken language is the major and most

complex techniques we have of communicating information. It allows us to produce a sequence of vocal sounds in such a way that another person can reconstruct from those sounds a useful approximation to our original meaning. In very simple terms, the sender starts with a thought and puts it into language. The receiver perceives the language and thus understands the thought as the following diagram illustrates:



(Broughton, et al, 1980:27)

Language without its communicative functions is not language at all, but mere parroting. We teach and learn a language in order to communicate, and teach and learn a language through communicative practice.

Linguistic competence refers to the ability to comprehend and compose grammatically correct sentences. Such competence depends upon knowledge of the grammatical rules of the language being learned. It is concerned with linguistic forms and answers the question "Is the utterance well- formed?" The following three sentences are grammatically correct and we might say that anyone speaking or writing such sentences gives evidence of good knowledge of the language: *I'm listening. What about carrying the suitcase for me? Would you mind carrying the suitcase for me?* On the other hand, we would judge anyone producing the following sentecnes to have inadequate knowledge: *I'm listen. What about carry the suitcase for me? Would you mind to carry the suitcase for me?* Therefore, all sentences should correspond to phonological, grammatical and semantical rules, that is, they should be acceptable and superficially well-formed.

Communicative competence refers to the ability to comprehend and use the well-formed sentences appropriately in real communication. Such competence depends upon unwritten social rules. It is concerned with communicative functions and answers the question "Is the utterance used in an appropriate way?" We conisder the student in the following exchange lacks in the communicative competence to some degree:

Teacher (with his arms full of books):

Do you think you could open that door?

Student (without moving to open the door):

Yes, I do.

This student has apparently understood the teacher's sentence literally, and her reply is grammatically correct. She has said "Yes, I do," but not "Yes, I think, " or something similar. Yet she has still failed to understand the function of the teacher's utterance as a request and she has not responded appropriately. So we would be inclined to say that she does not really know how to use the language, she is lacking in communicative competence.

Furthermore, we recognize the following exchanges are more appropriate between strangers:

A: How do you do?

B: How do you do?

A: Glad to meet you.

B: Me, too.

A: Would you mind carrying this suitcase for me?

And we recognize the following exchnages are more appropriate between friends or intimates:

A: How are you today?

B: Fine, thank you. And you.

A: Fine, thanks. What about carrying the suitcase for me?

Therefore, in the process of communication, the speaker must pass judgement on the social acceptabilty of his utterance and decide whether or not it is an appropriate response to the situations. He must consider his age, sex and social status, the relationship between the hearer and himself, i. e. "who speaks what language to whom and when" or "when, how, to whom it is appropriate to use the linguistic forms of a language".

Linguistic and communicative competences are both needed for effective communication which are desired goals of TEFL. Therefore, the true mastery of a language involves the two competences. Linguistic competence is prerequisite for communicative competence, without which there is no communicative competence to speak of. But such an ability has little value on its own. It has to be supplemented by knowledge of using sentences appropriately in communication to perform a variety of functions. On the other hand, the communicative competence does not result from the linguistic competence automatically. It is possible for

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students to have learned a large number of sentence patterns and a large number of words which they can fit into sentences without knowing how they are actually put into communication. This is because knowledge learning does not guarantee the development of communicative competence because linguistic competence is a part of communicative competence. Learning language forms is not enough; language functions also needs to be learned. If students still fail to know the functions, they may misunderstanding other people's intentions. Social rules which the communicative competence depends on not less important than grammar rules. Therefore, both areas require serious attention. Too much emphasis on one at the expene of the other almost always reaps the following consequences: (1) students will be able to communicate, but they will do so incorrectly; (2) students will be able to compose sentences correctly, but they will not be able to communicate approprietely and effectively.

However, it is generally acknowledged that the ultimate aim in language learning is to acquire communicative competence. The most important aspect of a sentence is the function, not its form. Often a sentence that is incorrect in form still conveys the desired intention. As Wilkins pointed out,"even where there is grammatical inaccuracy,communication can still take place successfully" (Wilkins, 1974:14). For example:

(a) I asked the teacher open the door.(with the omission of *to*)

(b) Excuse me, can you tell me way to post office?
(with the omission of *the*)

However, a formally correct sentence used inappropriately in communication can cause far more misunderstanding than a formally incorrect sentence used appropriately. For example, the following two sentences, although grammatically correct, are not polite and may cause offense to other people:

(a) I told the teacher to open the door.

(b) Hey, you. Tell me the way to the post office.

So for EFL students, it is sometimes be more important to achieve social appropriateness than to achieve linguistic correctness. In the process of teaching, therefore, the teacher should not only impart necessary language knowledge but also provide as much practice as possible for students to acquire the ability to use the language for communication. Just as the College English Syllabus of China requires, "importance should be attached both to language training at sentence level and to the gradual improvement of students' communicative competence at discourse level" (1991:9).

It is generally agreed that the traditionally the focus of attention has been on the linguistic competence. Most students are likely to concentrate only on grammar and vicabulary. As a result, they have attained an ability to compose grammatically and semantically correct sentences without knowing how they are actually used in communication. This has something to do with efforts of teachers who are enthusiastic about sentences analysis, word study and translation. It has commonly been supposed that once the linguistic competence is acquired, the communicative competence will follow as a more or less automatic consequence. What evidence we have, however, suggests that this is not the case: the acquisition of linguistic competence does not seem to guarrantee the consequent acquisition of communicative competence in a language. On the contrary, "overemphasis on drills and exercises for the production and reception of sentence tends to inhibit the development of communicative abilities" (Widdowson,1978:67).

This is not to imply that such drills and exercises are not necessary. This would only mean that the emphasis should be laid on the development of communicative competence because "the target linguistic system will be learned best through the process of struggling to communicate" (Finocchiaro and Brumfit,1983: 92). As Allright pointed out: "teaching comprehensively for linguistic competence will necessarily leave a large area of communicative competence untouched, whereas teaching equally comprehensively for communicative competence will necessarily cater for all but a small part of linguistic competence"(1979:168). Allright used the following diagram to make the point more clearly:

CC = Communicative Competence
LC = Linguistics Competence

(Allright, 1979:168)

According to the middle school English Syllabus, for Chinese middle school students,the linguistic competence at the end of the six-year course requires the following as its basis: 1) a fairly good English pronunciation and intonation; 2) a basic English vocabulary of 2000-2500 words and a certain quantity of phrases and idioms; 3) a good grasp of the basics of English grammar; and 4) a fairly high degree of skill in listening, speaking, writing , and reading independently with the help of dictionaries. As well as a fairly high degree of linguistic competence,

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it is necessary for the students to develop a reasonable degree of communicative competence, which, in simple terms, consists of the following: 1) a knowledge of the basic principles of appropriacy and an ability to apply such principles in real communication, 2)a knowledge of rules of speaking (e.g. knowing how to begin and end conversations, knowing what topics may be talked about in different types of speech events, knowing which address forms should be used with different persons one speaks to and in different situations; and 3) a knowledge of the basic strategies for using and responding to different types of speech acts, such as requests, apologies, thanks and invitations. The linguistic competence is regarded as the indispensable prerequisite for the communicative competence.

4. The Four M's Roles in the CLT.

Teaching is a four-way relationship between Men (teachers), Materials/Methods the teachers use, and Masters (students) . Any successful classroom teaching involves the four cardinal factors as follows: the teacher's role to improve students' learning by creatively using teaching methods and materials and the students' enthusiastic participation in the learning. This is a basic principle of all language teaching including our new method. To enable students become linguistically and communicatively competent, we regard the teacher's role as a facilitator, the students' role as active communicators, and the teaching methods and materials' role as a promoter.

4.1. Teacher's Role as a Facilitator.

We regards the teacher's role as a facilitator of students' learning to communicate. This is different from the traditional role of a teacher as an authority or master. As such the teacher has many new roles to fulfil.

(1) Manager. The teacher is a manager and organizer of classroom activities. In this role, "one of the major responsibilities is to establish situation likely to promote communication" (Larshen Freeman, 1986: 131) , trying "to organize the classroom as a setting for communication and communicative activities"(Richards and Rodgers, 1986:78). Language is not spoken in a vacuum and communication takes place in a real situation, so classroom activities should not be performed abstractly but realistically in an appropriate situation. Any classroom exchanges, in which students do not have to think about the situation in which the language is used, belong to mechanical exercises. In order to set up situation , we may use words, visual aids, facial expressions, gestures, actions, etc. In such classes students exchange messages, solve problems and bridge the information gap, thus

language is learned as it actually used in real life situation. Take a Littlewood's role play for example, after teaching the new items like "Shall we...? I feel like going.... What about going...?" the teacher sets up the following situation: "Your friend makes a lot of suggestions, but you feel too tired to do anything", then asks students in pairs to make a dialogue like this:

S1: Shall we go to the cinema?
S2: Oh no, I don't feel like going to the cinema.
S1: Shall we go swimming? (or What about a swim, then?)
S2: Oh no, I don't feel like going to swim (or have a swim).
(Littlewood, 1981:10)

"At the conclusion of the activities, the teacher leads in the debriefing of the activity, pointing out alternatives , extensions and assisting groups in self-correction discussion" (Richards and Rodgers, 1986:79), thus students learn to use the phrases in a particular situation.

(2) Adviser. During learning activities, some students may have learning difficulties and need help; others may have problems and confusions to be settled, so the teacher is "expected to exemplify an effective communicator seeking to maximize the meshing of speaker intention and learner interpretation, through the use of paraphrase, confirmation and feedback" (Richards and Rodgers,1986: 78). He or she may walk around the classroom to a particular group (pair or individual) to solve problems. Still other students may be not communicating effectively and making errors during conversation, so the teacher should also act as a monitor, taking note of students' linguistic or cultural mistakes, but usually will not intervene to correct a mistake when they are expressing themselves creatively so as not to interrupt their train of thoughts or make them unfluent. Usually the teacher correct mistakes in other ways. For example, after the activities, he points out the severe mistakes without referring to student names for their self- correction discussion. We insist more on fluency and comprehensibility of language rather on grammar accuracy. This is also an opposite view on student errors from the traditional one which stresses mainly accuracy, and in which, if students make errors or don't know an answer, the teacher usually supplies them with the correct one.

(3) Co-communicator. At other times, the teacher might be a "co- communicator", acting as an independent participant with the students,thus ensuring the two- way

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communication in class. When communicating in real life, people do not say to themselves, nor monologize as in a drama play, but always exchange information with others. There are three ways of the teacher's communication with studentlowing ways:

teacher - individual student

teacher - group

teacher - whole class

However, in these roles, the teacher should not become a main communicator in order not to occupy students' communicating time. He or she is only to demonstrate how to do activities, to help weaker students or to substitute an absent student because another important form of activities is preferable: student-student interaction as in the above Littlewood's example. It has some advantages over the previous three forms of activities,e.g. every student is kept communicating, listening and speaking; and the teacher has time to go around the class acting as an adviser, monitor, and co-communicator. This is also a different feature from the traditional class where most of the interaction is from the teacher to the students and there is little student initiation and little student-student interaction.

(4) Motivator. Besides the above three, there are other roles of teachers such as "motivator" and "evaluator". To ensure students to become active communicators, the teacher should motivate them because only strongly motivated students are active. Students will be more motivated if they, for example, have interest and needs of study. As a general rule, Chinese students in junior grade one have a strong interest in English,but along with language becoming difficult or improper teaching methods being used, they sharply lose interest in junior grade two, thus causing polarization - half students fall behind the others and terminate their English learning there. To prevent these extremes, the teacher should try to make activities so interesting that students look forward to them and feel regretful when they are over.

(5) Evaluator. To examine how good students' performance in class is, and to what degree of their linguistic and communicative competences they have gained, the teacher should act as an evaluator so as to improve his/her teaching if the evaluation does not reach the desired goal. The teacher can informally evaluate students' performance on the role as an advisor, monitor or co-communicator. For example, during the above dialogue designed by Littlewood, the teacher may examine the students' fluency of speaking as well as the accuracy of grammar. If students have not mastered some language items such as "I don't feel like doing...." he or she may drill it if necessary.

For some formal evaluation, the teacher is likely to use communicative test. This is an integrative test which contains "rules of speaking" as well as "rules of grammar". One type of such test questions is as follows:

You were applying to a university and needed a letter of recommendation. You went to a professor who was also your friend, and said:

A: I'd appreciate it if you could write a letter of recommendation for me.
(Correct answer, 2 points)

B: I want to ask you to write a letter of recommendation for me.
(Grammar accuracy but inappropriateness, 1 point)

C: I wonder if you would write a letter recommendating me.
(Some appropriateness but incorrect grammar, 1 point)

D: Hey, give me recommendation letter.
(incorrect grammar and inappropriateness, no point)

4.2. Students' Role as Communicators.

According to Larshen-Freeman, "students, above all,are communicators. They are actively engaged in negotiating meaning - in trying to make themselves understood - even when their knowledge of the target knowledge is incomplete. They learn to communicate by communicating"(1986: 131).Therefore the teacher should device a variety of activities for students to perform in order to learn to communicate. Meanwhile, the teacher must introduce the information gap - the essence of communication. In real life, we usually talk in order to tell people things they do not already know, or to find out things from other people: we have a reason to communicate, a "communicative need". In classroom activities, the teacher can create a similar need to communicate by introducing an information gap, - some students had information that others do not have, so there is a reason to talk and ask questions.

Larshen-Freeman also points out, "Since the teacher's role is less dominant than in a teacher- centered method, students are seen as more responsible manager of their own learning"(1986:131). This means that if students want to study more independently they must cultivate correct "attitudes to learning" and "approaches to learning" (Richards, 1990:13). In simple words, students must know not only why to learn but also how to learn. Therefore the teacher should begin from the very beginning with the "learning-aim education" to clear about the true learning purposes. In a Chinese context, this involves linking up students' studies with the

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realization of the four modernizations, helping students see present of future needs that English can satisfy, and helping them realize that English is a golden key to the store house of knowledge in the world. On the other hand, the teacher should help students to acquire scientific and effective method of study so that students may gradually learn to work and achieve success on their own.

4.3. Teaching Material's Role as a Promoter

Richards and Rodgers said, "practitioners of CLT view materials as a way of influencing the quality of classroom interaction and language use. Materials thus have the primary role of promoting communicative language use."(1986: 79) . They advocate the use of authentic language materials (1) to overcome the typical problem that students are unable to transfer what they learn in traditional classes to the real situation outside the class and (2) to expose students to natural language in a variety of situations.

The authentic materials are pieces of language,either spoken or written, which were originally messages produced for communication in a non-teaching situation . They are genuine pieces of communication designed for native speakers, so not structurally graded. Nor are they organized in order to demonstrate a language teaching point. On the contrary, they are linguistically rich and give students opportunities to extend their experience of English. Moreover, they are potentially more interesting than texts which have been specially contrived for language teaching purposes.

Because the authentic materails are designed for native speakers,they are may be too difficult to be materials to many TEFL students with lower proficiency. Larshen-Freeman has two solutions to this problem. One is to use simpler authentic material (e.g. the use of a weather forecast when working on predictions), or at least materials that are realistic. The other is to use realia that do not contain a lot of language, but about which a lot of discussion would be generated. Menus and timetables are two examples.

4.4. The Teaching Procedures

As regards to the teaching procedures used in a lesson based on CLT principles, there are controversies. Some CLT practitioners believe that the teacher should provide communicative practice from the start of the instruction, which is a reversal of the traditional procedures,as the following diagram illustrates:

Traditional:

I		II		III
Present	+	Drill	+	Practice in context

Communicative:

Communicate as far as possible with all available resources	+	Present language items shown to be necessary to achieve effective communication	+	Drill if necessary

(Brumfit, 1980:121)

However, others suspected that TEFL students in non-English-speaking environment are able to use new language for communication effectively before they have gained enough individual skills of pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. How can students use "How about going to see the ship?" to make a suggestion if they may have confused "ship" with "sheep" in sounds and are unable to pronounce other words correctly? They argued that even if they can, then the communication may be not very effective. So they concluded that it is not advisable to provide communicative practice before students have mastered the new language in the skills of sounds, vocabulary and grammar. For example, Finocchiaro and Brumfit suggested that CLT procedures are "evolutionary rather than revolutionary"(1983: 107-8). This means the teaching procedures retain some stages of the traditional method such as the "presentation" as the first stage for teaching the function "making a suggestion"(Ibid). The teacher needs "to offer both controlled and guided activities leading to fluency, accuracy, and habit formation(e.g. the ability to move lips and tongue quickly in forming a sound..." (Ibid, 100) . In addition, according to Littlewood, students need structural practice before going into communicative activities as the following teaching model illustrates:

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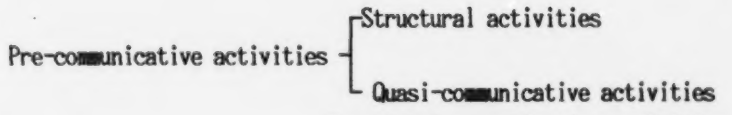


(1983:86)

As we can see from the diagram, the communicative strategies consist of two stages of activities: pre- communicative stage and communicative stage. The precommunicative stage is further divided into two periods: structural period and quasi-communicative period. During the structural period, the first period in the first stage, the teacher provides activities that will help students "to produce a certain language form in acceptable activities"(Ibid, 86) . During the quasi-communicative period,the teacher "isolates specific elements of knowledge or skill which compose communicative ability, and provides the learners with opportunities to practice them separately"(Ibid, 85). By the time the students finish the first stage of activities, they have developed "partial skills of communication"(Ibid) . Now they are ready for the second stage of activities.

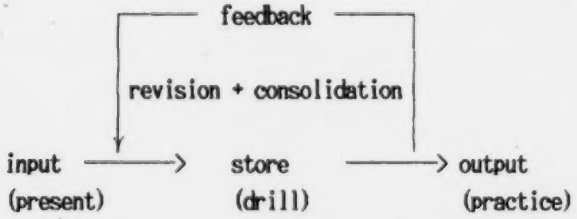
The communicative stage is also further divided into two periods: functional communicative period and social interaction period. During the functional communicative period, "the production of linguistic forms becomes subordinate... to the communication of meaning", and the teacher provides such activities as will increase the students' "skill in starting from an intended meaning"(Ibid, 89) . During the social interaction period, the second period of the second stage, the teacher requires the students "to go beyond what is neccessary for simply 'getting meaning across', in order to develop greater social acceptability in the language", and this stage "may also involve producing speech which is socially appropriate to specific situations and relations" (Ibid,86).

In China we are using the "five stage" method procedure which is required by the national unified Syllbus. The five stages are "review, presentation, drill, practice, and consolidation" which wins the teacher and students' popularity. Specifically, after *reviewing* related language in step 1, the teachers goes on with the new lesson. In step 2 they *present* new language points, either in spoken or written form by necessary explanation and/or demonstration in teaching situations

to make pronunciations,forms and meanings as clear as possible. In step 3 they *drill* the items in the form of mechanical, meaningful and communicative drills with stress on making correct forms in order to help students consolidate previous learning and form language habits and skills. In step 4 they organize students to *communicate* in the of activities to use the new items for communication. Finally, if necessary *drill* the items students have not mastered and goes on for *consolidation* of above achievements and for development of writing skills, i. e. students use what has been learned to practice written activities.

Generally speaking, the revision stage is a preparation stage which is to revice related language so that students can link old knowledge to new knowledge. The presentation stage is for the teacher to teach new language points and for students to meet and understand them. The three drills which are merged with the presentation are for students to master the language to gain language fluency, accuracy and habit formation, thus developing the linguistic competence. The practice of communicative activities is aimed at the ability to use langauge for communication freely, appropriately and effectively. The last stege is for consolidation of what has been learned to help form the communicative competence. It comes at the end of the lesson.which means that the class can be revise all the new language poiunts at the same time.In a word, the implication of this procedure is to enable students to gain fluent and accurate language points and also to output the gained information -to use language for communication.

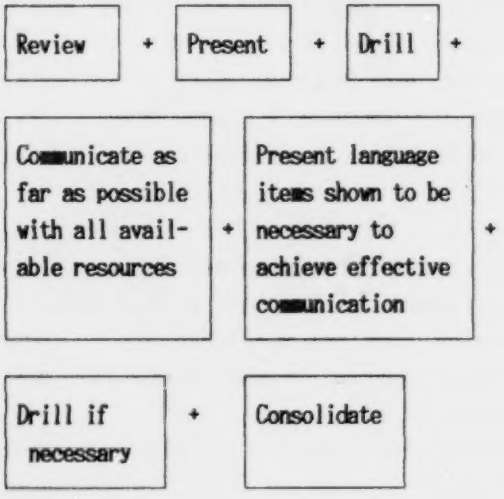
Also the five stage teaching conforms to the course of information processing as follows:



The order of processing the information from the input to the output through storing stage. The Five Stages conforms to this law. For the input, students use their eyes and ears and also brain for the receptive skills; and for the output they use mouths, hands and also brains for produtive skills. The storing process is the transformation of the two, without which the input is useless and the output

is impossible. And the feedback by the first stage of revision and the last one of consolidation is to monitor the whole process in order to guide the teacher's correct revision and presentation of information.

Considering the points mentioned above, it may be practical to consider how the strengths of both the traditional procedures and the communicative procedures might be combined so as to solve the problem of "language- knowledge shortage". Our suggestion is to combine the above necessary procedures, both traditional and communicative, into the following:



Specifically, the new procedures are as follows:

After *revieving* the old lessons, the teacher goes on with the new lesson:

---> He *presents* the new language, either in spoken or written form by necessary explanation and/or demonstration in teaching situations in order to make pronunciations,forms and meanings as clear as possible.

---> Then by asking questions or by using teaching aids or gestures and so on, he *drills* the items, using mechanical, meaningful and communicative drills with stress on making correct forms: to help students consolidate previous learning and form language habits and skills;

---> Next he organizes students to *practice* communicative activities in order to learn to use the new items for communication;

---> He also *presents* language items shown to be necessary to achieve effective

communication:

---> Finally, if necessary, he may *drill* the items students have not mastered and goes on for *consolidation* of above achievements and for development of writing skills, i.e. students use what has been learned to practice written activities.

It is clear that the purpose of the presentation is for students to understand new language items; the drill is to master items to develop the linguistic competence;the practice is to develop the ability to use items for communication; and the consolidation is to form the two competences.

Let's take teaching the structure "be going to" for example. After reviewing the meaning and usage of "shall" and "will", the teacher presents the new phrase "be going to" for comparison between them and explains its pronunciation, form and meaning. He also can compare its "notion of futurity" to the learned "notion of movement" such as:

(a) Is he going to help you? (=will)

(b) Is he going to town?(=move)

Then the teacher may drill the phrase in the form of (a) mechanical drill such as the substitution drill or transformation drill; (b) meaningful drill like the following:

T: I'm hot. S: I'm going to turn on the electric fan.

T: I'm cold. S: I'm going to open the window.

T: I'm thirsty. S: I'm going to get you something to eat.

and (c) communicative drill. For example, the teacher asks: "What time are you going to get up tomorrow?" "What are you going to have for breakfast? " "What are you going to do after breakfast?" and students answer them according to their actual plans.

Next, the teacher may provide a situation for students in pairs to play roles: "Your friends makes a lot of suggestions, but you feel too tired to do anything. First make a rejection and then suggest some other day to do it," and asks students to make a dialogue according to the situation. Finally the teacher may drill the items students have failed to master and assigns written work for consolidation of what has been learned and used.

5. Communicative Activities

To develop communicative competence, the CLT introduces the communicative activities into classrooms. According to teaching contents the teacher sets up communicative situations and motivates students to participate in such activities as role plays,simulations and social interactions in a near-natural linguistic and

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social environment to learn to use English for communication. According to Littlewood (1981:17-8), communication activities make contributions to language learning. They provide

. practice for various kinds of skilled performance (whole-task practice)
. raise students' motivation by relating the activities to the objective
. allow natrual learning to occure and
. create a context which supports learning.

Communicative activities can be used to train all the four skills, not only listening and speaking but also reading and writing, thus ensuring an all-round development of the four skills. By setting up situations, the teacher makes students learn just as native speakers acquire their mother tongue in the linguistic environment. Becides,they are relaxing activities. If mechanical drills are performed for a long time, students might lose interest of study. Then interesting communicative activities introduced into classrooms can overcome students' tiredness and boredom. Also they can help shy students to open mouths to speak English when they are doing interesting activities. Finally, they are a model of eclecticism, adopting the best teaching principles from many methods, thus being more scientific and reasonable. Take a role play for example:

Student A You like dancing and going to discos.Suggest to your partner that you go out this evening . Try to persuade him/her to go where you prefer.

Student B You don't like dancing and going to discos.You prefer going to the cinema or to a concert.Try to persuade your partner to go where you prefer.

(White,1982:21)

There are five teaching principles implicit in this activity: a)information gap from the communicative approach because students are not allowed to peep at the partners' cues; b) situation from the situational approach. The dialogue is

supposed to happen on the telephone exchange or at any one of the partner's home; c) student-centered orientation from the cognitive approach because activities are performed chiefly by students; 4) using the target language,and no native language being allowed from the direct method, and 5) pattern drill from the structural method on the structures such as "How about going to...? " or "Would you like going with me?" etc.

5.1. Types of Communicative Activities

According to Paulston and Bruder(1976,60-79), apart from games and charades, there are four basic types of communicative activities for developing communicative competence. The first type is "social formulas and dialogues" designed to teach appropriate use of language. For example, the teacher sums up formal phrases for "excuses and apologies", such as "Excuse me for being late. -- That's quite alright", and also informal ones such as "Sorry, I'm late. --- It's O.K." Then students learn to use them to play roles in both formal and informal situations. For example,

A. Structured

A: How was your vacation?

B: Great. Hey, thanks for the postcards.

A: Sure. But I didn't get any from you!

B:

B: Semistructured

A: What'd you get so angry at me for this morning?

B:

A:

B:

C. Unstructured

1. You're in class and suddenly you don't feel well.
2. You are at a friend's house for dinner.You must leave early to study for a test for the next day.

(Ibid, 62)

The second is "community-oriented tasks", which are "sets of exercises which compel the student to interact with native speakers outside the classroom. " For example, the teacher gives students questions about how to deposit money in a bank. Then students find answers in real situations outside the classroom. Later they report findings to the class. An alternative to oral report is for them to act their answers in a role play. One student acts as a bank employee and the other as

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a customer who wants to deposit his/her money. The teacher provides the following situation:

Alfred Newman has just moved to Pittsburgh and has gone to the Pittsburgh National Bank to open both a checking account and a saving account. He must answer questions asked by a bank employee who types out the information. He has a check for $5000 which he wants to put in the savings account and his first pay check for $289.35 with which he will open the checking account.

Roles: Alfred Newman - young man who has just moved to Pittsburgh
Tilda Thompson - bank employee

(Ibid, 65)

The third is "problem-solving activities". Students are given problems and puzzles to solve through discussion and debate. For example, the teacher provides the following plot and questions: "A man has been found dead in a phone box. There is a lot of blood. We know he has been speaking to his wife on the phone just before he dies because the receiver is off the hook. There is a creature in the phone box with him . The question is how the man died?" The teacher then tells the answer to a student in secret and gets him to stand before the class to answer the other students, but his answers are limited to only YES, NO or IRRELEVANT. For example,

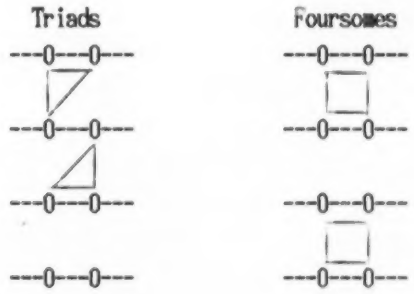
A: Was he killed by somebody else?	B: No.
A: What's the creature?	B: Irrelevant.
A: Then is the creature fish and the man fishman?	B: Yes.
A: The man broke the window of the phone box, didn't he?	B: Yes.
A: And the glass cut his vein of his hand. Is that right?	B: Yes.
A: When he said to his wife "The fish is this big", he stretched out his arm and broke the window. Am I right?	B: Yes.

The fourth is "role plays" which are "exercises where the student is assigned a fictitious role from which he has to improvise some kind of behavior toward the other role characters in the exercise." For example, each of the pairs is given a role card and asked to improvise and create using language to perform a task according to the cues like the above White's role play.

There are mainly five different configurations to perform communicative activities: pairs, triads, foursomes,small groups and whole class. All can ensure

students to participate in activities to some degree; but as the class size in Chinese classrooms is rather big usually with more than 50 students and as every pair of students sits by a desk facing the teacher, the pair work is preferable to the other forms because: (a) students need not change their seats and move together; (b) every student is kept working, talking and listening; and even the weakest are not afraid to speak because only his partner is listening to him, thus ensuring that every students are engaged in classroom activities.

During the triad and foursome activities, if needed, the teacher may arrange students in such a way that they do not move their chairs but with only one or two students turning around in order to maintain the discipline in class like the following (---0---0--- means two students sitting by a desk):



The small group activity with more than five students is hard to control in arrangement and may cause disorder in a big class if 5 groups of 10 students are leaving their seats and moving together. Besides, a student in the big group may not have a chance to speak in a short-time activity. However, such an activity has some other values for performance. For example, as a demonstration it may show the meaning of an utterance or the way to perform activities.

The whole class activity is the interaction between the teacher and the students. Although useful in some ways, it does not usually attract the attention of all the students. Many students do not for one reason or another (eg. uninteresting, tiredness) listen attentively to their classmate, especially when his or her English is poor, thus losing opportunities to practice listening and speaking.

The teacher has many roles to fulfil for the activity performance. For example, he is the initiator and manager of the activities but he does not always interact with students. Sometimes he is an advisor, walking around the classroom and answering students' questions and monitoring their performance. At other times, he

might be a "co-communicator",engaging in the activities along with the students. But more often he has to establish situations that prompt communication between and among students.

5.2. Information gap

To ensure true communication in classes, the teacher needs a painstaking and thoughtful preparation of activities in order to make every of them communicative. One of the important considerations is the information gap. Information gap is the essence of communication. Communication occurs when the receiver does not already know the information in the sender's message. In classroom terms, an information gap exercise means that one student or the teacher must be in a position to tell another something that the second student does not know.

However, in traditional classroom teaching, activities always lack the information gap. Many teachers often teach like this: they ask a student holding a pen in his hand: "Do you have a pen?" From the point of communicative teaching, this kind of dialogues lack information gap because they are exchanging information already known to both sides. This is often criticized as teaching English in a foolish way. Sentences like " Are you a student? Do you have a face? Do you sleep?" are often regarded as nonsence language, because they are seldom heard in real life situations and never used in actual communication. Such sentences as "Yesterday I went to USA", "Last night I met a friend", "Tommorrow I will go abroad. " are regarded as bodering on nonsense, because such drills force students to lie.

One of the most widespead ways of demonstrating the present continuous tense by "situational presentation" is for the teacher to perform an activity like walking to the door or to the window and to say while doing so: "I am walking to the door." Since everybody sees him walking to the door there is no need whatever for him to announce that he is doing these things. This practice is considered non-communicative, as no real information is exchanged. So they are "mechanical and artificial" (Richards,1985:140) and are not real communication.They only demonstrate "signification" rather than "value" of language(Widdowson, 1981:11). For remedies, the following teaching techniques are suggested for classroom use:

(1) Try to use gap languages

Stubbs notices that people often use the following sentences to exchange information: *If we do this, then_____;we may/might/ could_____; What do you mean? I don't understand; What I mean is_____; What you mean to say is_____.* etc.(1976). In order to reduce or even prevent non- gap dialogues and to make teaching realistic to social life, the teacher should often use these sentences and

the similar expressions such as "What do you mean? I can't understand your meaning, please explain. Please sum up what you said. Do you agree? Why or why not?" Thus students think and use language creatively and improvisationally. The teacher should also teach students to use them among students themselves.

(2) Vary techniques for asking questions

Questions are a way of introducing the information gap. Try to avoid asking foolish questions mentioned above. Try to avoid the foolish questions mentioned. Seeing a student's hair has just been cut, the teacher should not ask: "Have you had your hair cut?" but ask: "When or where have you had your hair cut?" thus bridging the information gap.

(3) Transform to communicative drills

If the teacher does need non-gap drills to demonstrate meanings or practice structures,he should transform them to communicative drills to ensure what Rivers calls "the great leap forward" to communication. There are three such drills suggested:

(a)Imaginable drills. Students learn to gain information in an imaginable situation such as in a street to practice "Where is...?", "It is...." One student may ask for the direction and the other gives the answer according to his map. For example:

S1: Excuse me, where is the bank?

S2: It's opposite to the post office.

S1: Excuse me, where is the bookstore?

S2: It's next to the theater.

(b) Guessing games. Students gain information by guessing, e.g. by using "Have you...?" to guess what the partner's picture is about? After using the object to drill the pattern "Have you a...?", the teacher uses *pictures* because students can not see what they are about when their backs are facing the students. The teacher takes out ten pictures of different fruits. After reviewing all their names, the teacher puts all the pictures into a bag, and asks S1 to the front to pick out a picture and hold it with its back to the students and to answer other students' questions "Do you have a...?" Then S2 comes up to help S1 and answers the questions "Does he have a...?" Next S3 helps S1 and S2 and answers "Do they have a...?" Finally comes the pair work: each student draws fruits and turns it over on the desk and the other guesses what it is by using "Do you have a...?" until the correct answer is found.

(c) True questions. For example, after drilling mechanically "My father is a

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doctor", the teacher asks students individually to answer "What does your father do?" with the name of their father's real profession.

(4) Transform further to communicative activities

Communicative drills are still only drills and students need to go beyond them to real interaction activities. According to Littlewood, the communicative drills are not communicative activities, but belong to "pre- communicative activities" which train "part-skills" in order to lay a foundation to do communicative activities for training of "total skill"(1983) . Therefore, pre- communicative activities should be transformed to communicative activities to develop communicative competence.

According to Prabhu (1987:46-7) , there are three types of communicative activities to narrow the information gap:

(a) *Information-gap activity,* involving a transfer of given information from one student to another in order to solve a problem or complete a task.The students often select relevant information and meet criteria of completeness and correctness in making the transfer. The above community-oriented activity is such an example.

(b) *Reasoning-gap activity*, which involves getting some new information from given information through the process of practical reasoning. Students often comprehend and convey information as in information- gap activity, but the information to be conveyed is not the same as new information comprehended at the beginning, because the new information is reasoning data. The above activity of problem-solving is such an example.

(c) *Opinion-gap activity*. This involves identifying and articulating a personal preference, feeling or attitude in response to a given situation. The students often use factual information and formulating arguments to justify their opinions, but there is no objective procedure for demonstrating outcomes as right or wrong, and no reason to expect the same outcome from different individuals or on different occasions.

For example, the tecaher divides the class into several groups to describe a person or a thing from different aspects, to explain a certain phenomenon, to give an opinion of an idea, to finish a dialogue, etc.

Please describe the object of TV from the following points of view:

1) you are an ancient man 2) you are a modern man

3) you are from an outer planet 4) you are from the future

After each group finishes, the teacher chooses the best to report to the rest of the class.

Another example. Knowing that some students have corresponded in the summer holiday, the teacher requires them to complete the following dialogue:

A: How was your summer holiday?

B: I had a good time so I hate coming back to school.

A: Did you get my letter?

B: Yes. OR No. (From here the teacher asks students to complete this dialogue according to their actual experience.)

1) B: Yes, thanks. And I meant to write to you too but I was just so busy! I'm sorry.

A: That's O.K. I know you probably didn't have much time.

2) B: No. I didn't receive your letter until August 28 when I came back from Beijing.

A: Don't worry about it. There is nothing important in my letter.

To conclude, the non-gap exercises in traditional classes can be avoided by using the gap language and by varying asking ways, and should also be transformed to communicative drills and activities, thus English is taught as communication. In other words, ideal classroom instruction,when we are using traditional materials, can be described as one in which each new pattern structure is first established as an automatic reflex habit by means of pattern practice at the mechanical level (structural practice) and then used as a means of communication (communicative practice).

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